

December 2, 2009

Michigan House of Representatives Judicial Affairs Committee
Lansing, MI

Re: Support of HB 5515, the Breastfeeding Bill

Dear Representatives:

I am a graduate research assistant in the Food Service and Human Nutrition Department at Michigan State University. My research focus is on breastfeeding and the factors that affect mothers' feeding decisions.

I support HB 5515 (the Breastfeeding Bill), which would allow a woman to breastfeed anywhere she may otherwise legally be. This bill would align the State of Michigan's position with that of health professionals worldwide in recognizing the important health benefits of the practice.

Breastfeeding has been endorsed worldwide as the optimal feeding method for infants by numerous public health and medical organizations. Breastfeeding benefits include reduced risk of breast cancer for the mother and reduced asthma and respiratory problems for the child, to name just a few. Additionally, breastfeeding provides economic benefit to families, health insurers, medical providers and employers.

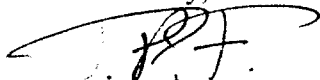
Unnecessary barriers to breastfeeding are well-documented. They include embarrassment, social disapproval of public breastfeeding, lack of community and health provider support, and difficulties in the work place. Passage of HB 5515 is an important step in overcoming some of these barriers.

One recent study analyzed state variations in breastfeeding rates. The results show that children in states with supportive breastfeeding legislation are more likely to be breastfed. This study also found that states with multiple pieces of supportive breastfeeding legislation have the highest percentages of breastfed children.

HB 5515 is a necessary step toward increased public awareness of the importance of breastfeeding. This is an opportunity for the State of Michigan to remove one barrier to women who choose to breastfeed. I support this bill as it is written.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



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